

The short story cycle in Western literature: modernity, continuity and generic implications

The thesis of the short story cycle (SSC) as a modern form has been proposed by a number of scholars, leading them to consider works belonging to the pre-modern tradition (often symbolically represented by the duo *Decameron/Canterbury Tales*) as «historical precedents» (Luscher 153; Kennedy 9) in which the 'external' framing device «is primarily an excuse for grouping together a potpourri of tales» (Dunn & Morris 21).

Other studies on the SSC however tend to focus on the historical continuity of the genre, albeit on different grounds: some reconsider the function of the framing device and the possibility of relatedness between the various pieces (Alderman 14, 63; Nagel 2), while others insist on the open structure of the story cycle and the multidimensionality inherent to the form (Lundén 7; March-Russell 107). The focus on continuity links SSC theory to non-Anglo-Saxon theories, such as Italian *macrotext* theory (Corti, Segre, Cappello) and Francophone *théorie du recueil* (a.o. Ricard, Audet). This diachronic shift of perspective has various theoretical implications, regarding not only questions of genre history and genre memory, but the autonomy of the genre itself as well: does the *genericity* of the SSC depend on the short forms it contains?

This paper aims to investigate the theoretical contraposition between modernity and continuity of the SSC (*recueil de nouvelles structuré, raccolta di narrative breve strutturata*) in Western literature. It further proposes an interaction between the three cited theories, by insisting on their complementarity and by the application of SSC theory on Romance literature.

(Provisional) bibliography

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